

MEDLEY

- a potpourri of diverse talent

August 2016

Vision Statement

To create a diverse workforce and promote a positive work environment where all employees are respected and valued for their contributions.

USDA-ARS-Midwest Area Diversity and Equal Opportunity Council (DEOC) members:

Kelli Adkins, Lexington & Bowling Green, KY

Carl Bernacchi, Urbana, IN

Veera Boddu, Peoria, IL

Wayne Coblentz, Chair, Madison, WI

Tom Coudron, Co-Chair, Columbia, MO

Kathy Eystad, Morris, MN

Javier Gonzalez, West Lafayette, IN

John Kovar, Ames, IA

Renfu Lu, East Lansing, MI

Luis Martinez, Columbus, OH

Jacki Morrison, St. Paul, MN

Paul Scott, Employee Engagement Council

Kathy Jones, Employee Engagement Council

Sherri Buxton, Peoria, IL, MWA Office Advisor

Debra Owens-Coleman, MWA ODEO Program Manager, Advisor

Employee Engagement Council Seeks to Improve Employee Satisfaction

Written by Paul Scott

One of the goals of ARS Administrator Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young is to increase employee satisfaction in ARS. The Employee Engagement Council (EEC) was created to help meet this goal and uses the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) to drive Council activities. After analyzing the survey results, ARS has identified areas in which employees perceive a need for improvement. The EEC, a diverse group of ARS employees including representatives from each area, seeks to develop and disseminate creative solutions for these problem areas. MWA EEC representatives Kathy Jones (Peoria, IL) and Paul Scott (Ames, IA) are tasked with coordinating communication about employee engagement among the MWA locations.

In addition to examining the FEVS results, Kathy and Paul have consulted with location leaders in each location to hear their thoughts about employee engagement. Many ideas emerged from these discussions such as:

- Communication is critical: Small things like keeping office doors open when possible can make a big difference. Staff meetings with direct, brief, concise, and consistent messages help employees connect. Some units have research presentations; others include non-scientific topics as well.
- Involve employees in activities: All employees should be involved in lab safety activities. Some units involve employees in development of 5-year project plans. In some units, all employees develop “elevator talks” to help them communicate the importance of their work to the public.
- Respect employees’ time: Everyone is busy. Do not take employee’s time with unnecessary meetings, webinars, and trainings. Summarize information when possible. Ensure that training is necessary, concise, and high quality.

We hope these ideas will help improve employee engagement in your unit. If you have additional ideas for promoting employee engagement or want to get more involved in engagement council activities, please contact Kathy or Paul.

In This Issue:

Employee Engagement Council Seeks to Improve Employee Satisfaction

Making a Difference

Did you Know?

FAESRU Earth Day, Bowling Green, KY

Have you met Dr. Robert Matteri, Midwest Area Director?

Ames Area Civil Rights Committee Hosts Marion Blumenthal Lazan

CREDO Activities at NCAUR, Peoria, IL

Special Emphasis Programs/Observances/Resources and Information

Continued on next page...

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Employee Engagement Council Links:



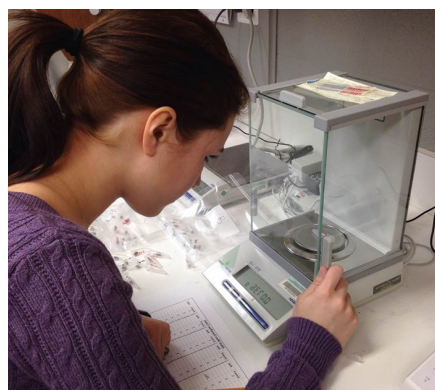
ARS Employee Engagement council: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/Engage/Pages/Home.aspx>



More information about the FEVS: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/Engage/Pages/FEVS.aspx>

Making a Difference

Submitted by Tom Coudron



Today's push for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) initiatives at the high school level is nothing new. As a science teacher in the public school system for the past forty years, I have watched many programs come and go, only to be replaced by purport-

edly better programs. I personally can attest to one successful program that has, over the years, sparked a long term interest in science and prepared my students for college. It is independent science research. In this program, the individual student selects a research topic and then, after conducting a review of the literature, poses a question or designs a problem that can be investigated. These projects are often quite sophisticated, and that is where the USDA-ARS Biological Control of Insects Research Laboratory (BCIRL) in Columbia, Missouri has made an incredible difference for the success of my students. I teach in a small rural high school in Central Missouri. The high school student population is around 60-70 students. Most are on free and reduced lunches, which designates us as a Title I school. We have only one science teacher in grades 9-12. Our lab is small and with minimal resources. When I first approached Dr. Coudron, a research chemist, about the possibility of one of my senior students coming to the lab to be mentored, he was quite receptive. That was in 2001. My student, Jake Wilson, ended

up going to the lab for training on the rearing of the pest insect that he wanted to control with a novel pesticide. The experience was life changing. Jake was quite successful with the research that he conducted. He was awarded the Lucy Lopata Creativity Award (\$1000) at the Missouri Junior Science Engineering and Humanities Symposium and was selected to compete in San Jose, California at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. After graduating from high school, Jake went to Missouri State University and obtained a degree in biology. He currently conducts research at Lincoln University (an 1890 institution) with their Co-operative Extension Program where he works on integrated pest management. Jake was just the beginning. In the past fifteen years, Dr. Coudron and Dr. Shelby, both researchers at the USDA BCRL have mentored four more of my students: Drew Sanning, Michael Stockwell, Ross Sparrow and Ashley Wyrick. For each of these students, the opportunity to work in a state-of-the-art lab with experts in their research field was an invaluable experience! All four of these students were also selected to compete in international competitions. Drew, Michael and Ashley competed in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. Michael and Ashley were both Grand Award winners. Ross and Ashley competed at the International Sustainable World Energy, Environment and Energy Project (I-SWEEEP) Olympiad two years in a row. They both medaled in the competition. Ashley and Michael also presented their research at the National Science and Engineering Symposium. Although the chance to compete at the international level was wonderful, the greatest benefit of working at the BCIRL was the confidence that each of the students developed as he/she worked with mentors that were genuinely interested in their research ideas. This confidence followed them through high school and on to their undergraduate endeavors. Drew graduated from high school in 2006. He obtained a degree in agriculture from the University of Missouri. Michael graduated from high school in 2008. He obtained a mechanical engineering degree from Missouri University of Science and Technology. He is currently a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He graduated as an F-15 pilot and is stationed in Italy. His long term goal is to join NASA and be a part of the Mars project. Ross graduated from high school in 2015. He is currently attending Missouri University of Science and Technology and plans to obtain an engineering degree. Ashley graduated this past May and is enrolled at the University of Central Missouri. She plans to study forensic science. The question is often asked, "How can federal research programs make a real difference in the world?" The answer, from my perspective, is "Invest in the future, mentor a student." I am grateful that the researchers at the BCIRL do just that!!

*Written by: Mrs. Connie Wyrick
Honors Research Advisor
Tuscumbia High School
Tuscumbia, Missouri*



Have you met Dr. Robert Matteri, Midwest Area Director?

Q. *What life and previous work experiences have prepared you for your current position as Midwest Area Director?*

Dr. Matteri: My paternal grandfather was one of three brothers who came to the US from Italy in the early 1900s and went in to the dairy business. My father was raised on a dairy farm, and my mother came from a diversified farm, producing regional cheeses, in Italy. My summers as a youth were spent on my grandfather's farm in Santa Rosa, California. With a family history in agriculture, I had an appreciation early-on for what it takes to get food to the table. As I developed an interest in science in college, the link to agriculture was always there. Early in my research career, ARS hired me as an Animal Physiologist in a Unit with an imminent Research Leader vacancy. Although I didn't have a definite career plan for science leadership, my Area Director asked me to consider the RL job. In my

nine years as RL, my supervisors and mentors encouraged me to take on leadership details and higher-level committee tasks that were great developmental experiences. Particularly valuable was an Acting NPL detail.

I was fortunate to be selected for the PWA Assistant Director position in 2001. As I was learning the many aspects of Area Office functions, my supervisor (Dr. Toni Betschart) encouraged me to undertake at least one developmental activity per year. This culminated in being accepted to PEAK (Professional Excellence and Knowledge), a 2-year program for executive level development in ARS. With these experiences, it was a natural decision to apply for the PWA Associate Director position when it became vacant in 2008. In 2012, I was reassigned as the Midwest Area Director.

Q. *In your opinion, what personal attributes must one possess to excel in USDA-ARS as a technician, Office/Administrative Support Professional, scientist, or research leader?*

Dr. Matteri: It would be interesting to ask this question in a group setting to see how many different answers there would be. For me, the top items would be a commitment to the quality of work, adaptability to change, and working well with people. I think the drive for excellence naturally emerges when we follow our true interests in careers that are personally and professionally satisfying.

In addition to producing high quality work on time, people recognized as excelling typically have a sincere interest in continual improvement and finding better ways to do things. Continual improvement is what we do every day in supporting and conducting research which develops new food production systems, products and technologies, and there are plenty of opportunities for improvement in administrative processes.

We work in an environment of frequent change, so people who are adaptable and can make the best out of change will do well. New discoveries and technologies are continually re-shaping the way we do research. Within the organization in a relatively short time, we have seen creation of Business Service Centers, cyber-security changes stemming from OPM data breaches, the reorganization of ARS from eight to five Areas, and initiatives to revise numerous business and administrative processes, travel systems, biosafety policies, and oversight of animal care and use. Change can be challenging at times, but often comes with opportunity to take a fresh look at how we do things.

A critical attribute for success is working well with others. Much of our work is done in teams, and we depend on others who play different roles in getting things done. A working environment that promotes teamwork and partnership is based on understanding and accepting diversity and different opinions, overcoming interpersonal issues that sometimes arise, and making contributions to an enjoyable and productive workplace. A hallmark of excellence is taking the first step in developing working relationships with co-workers. It sometimes can be hard to see things from the perspective of others, but we develop new strengths when we open up to diverse ideas and opinions. People who go the extra distance in mentoring, overcoming differences, and developing good relationships can make a real difference in the success of the organization.

Q. *What advice would you give a new scientist, research leader, or center (laboratory) director for managing a research program, unit, or laboratory, respectively?*

Dr. Matteri: There's a lot to come up to speed on in these jobs. You already have the technical expertise if you've been selected for a science leadership position, but "people skills" are needed as well. People advancing to higher leadership positions typically come with prior on-the-job experience in working with people, but this isn't always the case for those just getting started. In any case, I would definitely advise finding a mentor – someone you respect and is recognized as an experienced leader. Depending on your level of experience, there is good training available through sources such as OPM or USDA Graduate School. A good leadership course starts off with a "360 evaluation", which is a great way to identify areas for personal improvement.

In starting a new leadership job, the priority for me would be to get acquainted with the people you will be working with. These are the folks who will get things done, and you can't manage your organizational unit or be successful in your new job without their help. Get to know their interests and strengths, combine that with a good understanding of their job duties, monitor performance and provide honest feedback, and support them as best you can. Your time and availability for one-on-one interaction definitely becomes limited in a larger organization, but try to keep an open door policy that encourages everyone to share their individual perspectives.

General information on employee perspectives also is available from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). As an example, for several years the FEVS results have indicated that a large part of the workforce doesn't feel that managers adequately address poor performance (about half of surveyed employees in the 2016 results). Although managers can't share confidential information on what is

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being done to improve performance, it's important to know that the negative perception is out there. On a positive side, the 2016 survey results show that 98% of MWA employee are willing to put in extra effort to get the job done. These are just several examples. The main point here is that there is useful information out there that can help new leaders to better understand and engage their teams.

Q. *From your perspective, please describe the most important functions of the Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO), and how they benefit USDA-ARS?*

Dr. Matteri: One important function is to help improve our workforce diversity. Multi-disciplinary research teams have always relied on the strength of diverse expertise and approaches to solve complex problems. Whether working toward scientific or administrative solutions, different perspectives and ideas that come from a diverse team open us up to new ways of thinking and lead to better outcomes. In addition to better team outcomes, diversity creates a more interesting and enjoyable work environment. The workplace would be pretty bland if everyone was the same.

The ODEO office is a big help in the recruitment arena, giving us regular data on our workforce demographics relative to the Civil Labor Force (CLF), which lets us know how we are doing and where to put more focus. ODEO program managers assist us with advertising job announcements to reach diverse candidate pools, and provide consultative advice on fair and equivalent recruitment processes. In addition, they are an excellent resource for anyone interested in pursuing non-competitive special hiring authorities that target people with disabilities.

A workplace known for welcoming diversity is a great recruiting attraction, so another important part of the ODEO program includes policies and activities that promote our knowledge, acceptance, and appreciation of other cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Many ARS locations have diversity and outreach committees that organize and conduct Special Emphasis Program events that reach many employees. Our larger MWA locations have pretty good access to invited speakers, and we are currently testing the possibility of recording such events that we can broadly share via web resources.

Q. *What do you see as the greatest challenge to USDA-ARS with respect to ODEO? What is your personal outline for meeting this challenge?*

Dr. Matteri: In my opinion, the greatest challenge we face is increasing the diversity of our applicant pools. In addition to shorter-term recruitment and advertisement strategies, I see our student outreach programs as a valuable longer-term investment in stimulating future career interest in the agricultural sciences. Our regular MWA ODEO update, Medley, always has excellent examples of outreach events that reach a lot of students. One of our articles last year was on a science outreach program for middle-school girls developed by one of our scientists in Urbana, Illinois, Lisa Ainsworth. The article highlighted such a good example, that we nominated Lisa for a successful national-level ODEO award in FY15. Wherever you go in the Midwest, we host a variety of student-oriented educational programs and field-trip tours. We have an annual call for summer internship proposals, and the Area Office has been able to help with supporting 12 student employees for the past several years. Filling the pipeline for our future workforce is always important.

Q. *If you could change one thing about USDA-ARS generally, as well as one thing about ODEO specifically, what would they be?*

Dr. Matteri: The biggest thing for me is not so much with ARS, but how ARS is funded. It would be nice to have annual funding increases from Congress that keep up with salary increases. We get regular cost-of-living salary increases, but rarely receive appropriations that include additional money to cover these costs. With flat budgets, our discretionary funds decline as fixed costs, such as salaries, go up. Without program increases in the annual appropriation, we can get to a point where we have no choice but to cancel positions after retirements in order to have enough money to cover research costs.

Ultimately, our level of funding depends on good customer/stakeholder support, which influences Congressional support. Compared with Agencies such as NASA and NIH, not many people on the street know about ARS. We all can be good ambassadors of ARS so that our stakeholders, and the general public, are aware of the work we do and why it makes a difference for them. Accordingly, it's important for us to stay up-to-date on our many accomplishments and their impact. Regular group meetings are a good way to keep up with the specifics within our research units. At the Agency level, AgResearch magazine highlights work across the country. Subscribing to AgResearch is free and can be done on the internet (<http://agresearchmag.ars.usda.gov/subscribe>). If anyone asks you what you do, you should have a good story to tell that includes ARS examples that people can relate to (absorbent material in baby diapers, soy ink, 100% fruit bars, biodegradable "plastics", etc.). Take a look at "Science in Your Shopping Cart", and you will be amazed at all the products in the marketplace that have come from ARS: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/np/shopcart/shopcart.pdf>.

With regard to the ODEO program, it would be good to look for opportunities to interact more across National and Regional programs. I think there would be value in increasing connectivity and communication among our many location and Area Diversity and Outreach committees across the country. Sharing ideas for better outreach and recruitment strategies that can be emulated is a good way to stimulate new ideas for program improvement. With modern telecommunications and IT capabilities, regular communications and meetings among Area-level ODEO committee leaders could be easily accomplished. Within MWA, we have an excellent Diversity and Outreach Council that has done a lot of work on how we communicate and engage our workforce regionally. The ODEO office has really helped MWA with program support. In recent years, this has been accomplished with Program Managers located outside of the MWA.

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While these people have done a great job, there is a lot of value in having local Program Managers who can get to know people and programs first-hand. I am pleased to say that the ODEO office is planning to recruit for a new program manager for MWA, who will be located in Peoria, Illinois.

Q. *Do you have any thoughts about how USDA-ARS should address the large number of employees soon eligible to retire?*

Dr. Matteri: We are continually refilling vacancies, so I think we have to focus on the basics and on things that we currently are doing to improve recruitment success. The key is to develop pools of qualified candidates. Good advertising is important, so hiring managers should be thinking in advance of where to place ads for maximum visibility. Our ODEO program managers can be a big help in targeting where to advertise. Developing a good job announcement is critical. Although open periods for application can be very short due to government initiatives to increase hiring speed, we have a relatively new option of using a “pre-advertisement,” which describes a position that will be open at a later date. This can give us more time to get the word out for our specialized technical positions.

The most important factor in attracting applicants is creating a work environment that is personally and professionally satisfying. Everything we do in creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace contributes to this goal. New job seekers put a high value on careers where they can make a difference, so we need to continue to be recognized for the quality and impact of our work. In addition to continuing our excellent work in Agricultural research, our positive communications with stakeholders and the public contribute to the high reputation of ARS.

Succession planning is a big part of recruitment strategy so that we can project out on anticipated retirements for hard-to-fill positions prior to retirements. Are the needed skills and knowledge available such that there will be a good source of qualified applicants? If not, do we need to develop pools of internal candidates or be able to bring new employees up to speed? An exciting pilot program for phased retirement program is being initiated within REE, where people can enter into a half-time retirement/half-time employment arrangement in order to mentor and train their replacements. Details on this new program can be found on the Axon home page.

Q. *In your personal life, what do you do to ‘recharge’ yourself from the constant demands of your administrative responsibilities?*

Dr. Matteri: These kinds of leadership jobs can take 100% of your personal time if you let them. There always will be times when you have put in extra hours to meet deadlines, but it is important to draw the line and set aside time for you and your family. What works for me is maintaining fitness and doing things that take my mind off of work. I have a regular exercise schedule which includes strength and flexibility training and running a couple of miles every other day. My other outside activities vary over time, but need to be completely different from those at work. Right now, I’m doing a basement renovation that includes new family room and bathroom areas. When I’m not busy with remodeling projects, I enjoy fishing, gardening, and cooking when time permits. I also try to visit family in California at least once a year.



Ames Area Civil Rights Committee Hosts Marion Blumenthal Lazan

Written by John Kovar

The United States Congress in 1980 established the Days of Remembrance as our nation’s annual commemoration of the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was created that same year as a permanent living memorial to the victims. In 2016, the Days of Remembrance observance took place May 1st through May 8th, with the Day of Remembrance, known as Yom HaShoah, on May 5th. In observance of the Days of Remembrance, the Ames Area Civil Rights Committee invited Marion Blumenthal Lazan to speak on Monday, May 2, 2016.

Marion Blumenthal was born in Germany in 1935. Following Hitler’s rise to power, the Blumenthal family managed to escape Nazi Germany and get to Holland, but soon thereafter it was occupied by the Nazis. For six and a half years, the Blumenthals lived in refugee, transit, and prison camps, including Westerbork in Holland and the notorious Bergen-Belsen in Germany. After World War II ended, Marion, her mother, and older brother emigrated to the United States, and settled in Peoria, Illinois. Marion has traveled extensively

to speak to young and old about her experiences as a child during the Holocaust. Upwards of one million students and adults, representing hundreds of schools in 30 states, Germany, and Israel, have personally heard Marion and her messages of respect, tolerance, and overcoming adversity. Marion spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at the National Centers for Animal Health (NCAH).

Learn more about Marion Blumenthal Lazan at www.fourperfectpebbles.com



Holocaust Remembrance Day



MARION'S TRIUMPH

Surviving History's Nightmare

Marion Blumenthal Lazan

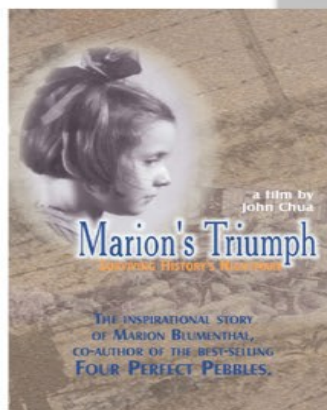
Holocaust survivor

When: May 2nd, 2016

Time: 10:00 to 11:00 am

Rooms: 1055/1057 CLF

National Centers for Animal Health



Sponsored by: AACRAC (Ames Area Civil Rights Advisory Committee)

It is expected that employees attending this event will be allowed on regular time (01).
Supervisory approval is required.

CREDO Activities at NCAUR, Peoria, IL

Written by Veera Boddu

The Civil Rights Employee Development Organization (CREDO) at The National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR) is chartered to enhance employee development in the area of civil rights and individual awareness of diversity at the work place. CREDO seeks to foster a work culture unrestricted by consideration of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability or national origin. The CREDO charter calls for advising and assisting the NCAUR Center Director in establishing and carrying out the objectives of the NCAUR Civil Rights Program. CREDO organizes special activities for observances, such as Black History Month, in accordance with Agency and Departmental guidelines. However, CREDO will not attempt to resolve individual discrimination or grievances, but will direct such matters to the proper channels for disposition.

The NCAUR's CREDO typically has at least eight members serving a term of not less than two years. The membership of the CREDO committee will have an American Federal Government Employee (AFGE) union member, a minority group member, a management representative, and one or more members representing various grade or classification levels and gender. Any member of the CREDO committee will be serving at most two terms. The members of the CREDO committee elects a chairperson, a co-chair, a secretary, a hospitality coordinator and other officers as deemed necessary. The current Chairperson is Dr. Hwang-Sik Hwang, the Co-chair is Dr. David Compton, the Secretary is Ms. Vicky Brooks, and the Hospitality coordinator is Ms. Benetria Banks. The committee has a total of 10 persons in various helping roles. The chairperson is responsible for conducting regular monthly meetings, activities and reporting to the director.



As part of the awareness programs, CREDO designates each month with a specific theme and conducts special events, and usually about 60-100 NCAUR employees are in attendance. The following are a summary of events that were conducted during this calendar year.

On January 20, 2016, a video "Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Movement Episode 5" was presented as part of the celebration of **Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday**. *Eyes on the Prize* is the most comprehensive television documentary ever done on the American Civil Rights Movement. The program tells the story of America's civil rights years from 1954 to 1965: the triumphs and tragedies, the pain and passions of blacks and whites in the American south as they tested their power to effect change. Churches, courtrooms, lunch counters, and city buses all became the battlefields as the weapons of non-violence and written law probed the boundaries of individual rights. The previous year, NCAUR's CREDO screened the fourth episode in this series,

"No Easy Walk (1961-1963)." In 1954, just weeks after the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, segregationists in the Mississippi Delta formed the first White Citizens' Council (WCC), an organization devoted to the preservation of white political power and to resisting all forms of integration. As the WCC was forming to thwart racial equality, civil rights activists were implementing a plan to register black voters in a bid to open "the closed society." This series focuses on the voter registration drive and the racist backlash of intimidation and violence that followed.



February was designated as **Black History month** and a video presentation - A Distant Shore: African Americans of D-Day was shown. The presentation was screened in the NCAUR auditorium on Monday, February 29, 2016, during 12:00 noon - 1:00 PM. The video summarizes the 1997 recognition of seven African-American WWII heroes awarded this country's highest military decoration after waiting for nearly half a century. Only one veteran remained alive to accept his Medal of Honor from President Bill Clinton, but he alone represented the thousands of forgotten African-American soldiers who fought and died alongside their white comrades. The story of African-Americans fighting for the United States of America in WWII is a saga both glorious and shameful. This moving documentary pays tribute to the valor and sacrifice of African-American soldiers while shedding light on the discrimination and disregard that at times proved more threatening than the rigors of battle. 1.2 million African-Americans served in World War II, and although largely forgotten by history, nearly 2,000 of them stormed the beaches of Normandy. For the first time ever, seven of these forgotten heroes tell their stories. Through dramatic recreating and in-depth interviews we discovered the African-American contribution to the Normandy Invasion.



March was designated as **Women's History Month**. Dr. Rita Ali (Vice President of Diversity, International and Adult Education at Illinois Central College, Peoria, IL) gave a presentation on "Embracing Change in the Modern-Day Cultural Revolution" on Thursday, March 24, 2016, from 10:00-11:00 am in the NCAUR Auditorium. Dr. Ali has been recognized locally and nationally for her work in establishing innovative diversity programs and facilitating healthy community dialogue. Dr. Ali has conducted extensive research in the area of mentoring. She collaborated with key leaders on campus and in the community to launch a comprehensive, aggressive strategy to effectively recruit and retain students of color in college. Dr. Ali mentioned that she cherished the memories of her working as a Co-op

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student assistant at NCAUR while she was attending high school in Peoria, IL. She is Chairwoman of the City of Peoria Police-Community Relations Committee and President of the King Holiday Committee of Peoria. Her daily prayer is *"God, make me an instrument of your Peace and Love."* Her presentation covered a century of women's rights progress, starting with the Women's Right to Vote (1920, the 19th amendment), Gender Discrimination Act (1965), Fair Housing Act (1968), No Fault Divorce law (1969), Pregnancy Discrimination Act (1969), and the Declaration of Women's Month (1995). She also discussed the changes occurring in the work place, such as more women are working, but still the gender gap in salaries persists. Also the roles of women are changing in the work place. She also identified that now there are more women and minorities in the work place and in different professions. She conveyed that prejudice based on gender, race, religion or national origin is a social burden that threatens our future. Her presentation was very interactive and several members of the audience participated in the discussions.



The CREDO organizing committee designated May as **Asian American Heritage Month**. This year, Dr. Veera Boddu presented "A Brief Glimpse of India" to cover the Geography of India, India as a Democracy, Culture, Languages and Religion. He also

presented a few facts about the influence and accomplishments of a few notable Indian Americans in the United States, in education, healthcare, business and politics. Past programs educated employees about China, Korea and others.



June was designated as **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month/LGBT Awareness Month**. Marcus Fogliano, the president of the Peoria Proud organization was invited to give a presentation on June 26, 2016, at NCAUR. The title of Marcus' presentation was "What's the Tea: Understand the People, Culture and Politics of

the Transgender Community." Marcus brought a group of three transgender persons. The group discussed several aspects of their daily life. The presentation discussed several social, economic and medical hardships the LGBT community faces. Some specific cases such as the Caitlyn Jenner case were part of the discussion. The audience got a brief tutorial on LGBT terminology, including how to address bisexual and transgender people, such as binary (Mx like Ms., Mr. or Mrs.). Audience members participated by asking questions on how not to offend and be helpful and compassionate to the LGBT persons. The presentation and discussions were also videotaped and are available for watching at your convenience.

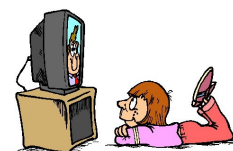


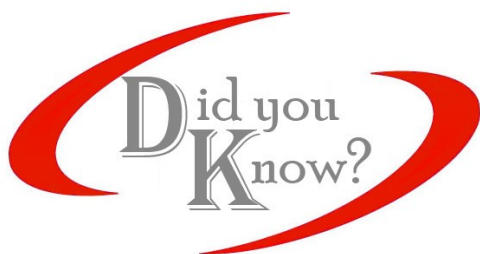
The month of July is not designated with a specific theme or observance, so the CREDO Committee sponsored a **CREDO Snack Day in July**. The focus was to have a "Ethnic or Not-So-Ethnic Snack Day" and is a way of recognizing the many cultures and sub-cultures, and a way to enhance interactions among people of different cultures. Therefore, the CREDO committee decided to celebrate the eclectic cultures and sub-cultures that define NCAUR with a focus on the various kinds of cuisines that are consumed locally and from around the world. All of the NCAUR, MWA, and ARS employees were welcome to attend and had the option of bringing in a dish or beverage that represented their cultural backgrounds or something that is generally enjoyed. As anticipated, the event was a success. Employees gathered in delight and warm reserve, held conversations about their dishes, exchanged recipes and gleefully shared their family backgrounds.

Upcoming CREDO activities include observance of Hispanic Heritage Month (September), National Disabilities Employment Awareness Month (October), and Native American Heritage Observance Month (November). These observances will include presentations by accomplished and prominent speakers who can enlighten NCAUR members on various themes relevant to the monthly observance themes.

The NCAUR Center Director (Dr. Paul Sebesta) and MWA Administrators (Drs. Robert Matteri, J.L. Willet, and Alberto Pantoja) and the ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) committee advisor (Mrs. Debra-Owens-Coleman) have suggested to the CREDO organizing committee to record the presentations by invited guests and make them available to viewing by other MWA employees and other locations. The video recording option is being implemented with a consent from the speakers. The video recordings are available on the ODEO webpage.

Here is a direct link where you can view the CREDO presentations if you would like to take a look: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/Docs.htm?docid=25983>.





The Area ODEO Program Manager can provide your Location brochures, handouts, and other miscellaneous material for outreach and career fair events. For example:

About USDA – A Quick Reference Guide gives an overview of USDA and provides information about some of the USDA agencies and offices, their missions, responsibilities, and services they provide.

STEM Career Opportunities with USDA-ARS! Brochure identifies ARS scientific technologies used in three products, lists ARS' major scientific occupations, and provides contact information for ARS career opportunities.

USDA Pathways Programs brochure provides basic information about the Internship Program, Recent Graduate Program, and Presidential Management Fellows Program, as well as contact information for the ARS Human Resources point of contact.

REE Job Seekers with Disabilities brochure provides information regarding hiring people with disabilities on the Schedule A Appointing Authority with ARS and other REE Mission Area offices, as well as contact information for the ARS Human Resources point of contact.

REE Veterans Programs brochure provides information on hiring flexibilities and types of Veterans' preference with ARS and other REE Mission Area offices, as well as contact information for the ARS Human Resources point of contact.

USAJOBS Fact Sheet explains the free web-based USAJOBS.gov job board; who can use USAJOBS.gov; and how to get started searching, applying and finding a federal job on USDAJOBS.gov.



FAESRU Earth Day, Bowling Green, KY

The Food Animal Environmental Systems Research Unit (FAESRU) participation in the Earth Day 2016 event was hard fought and slightly belayed due to the rash of foul weather this year. On April 28, 2016, the Unit came together to plant some flowers, tomatoes, and squash in our garden.

Sixteen people attended this much abbreviated Earth Day Event. The plans are to continue the addition of plants to the garden over the next few weeks.



Special Emphasis Programs/Observances/Resources and Information

By Debra Owens-Coleman

Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs) are an integral part of the overall civil rights, human resources and program delivery functions. The purpose of the SEPs is to provide oversight, guidance, direction, enforcement and assistance to enhance opportunities for women, minorities, and people with disabilities in all employment and program delivery activities.

Employment activities: Recruitment, hiring, promotions, separations, awards, training, or any other employment action which impacts on the inclusion of and equal opportunity for women, minorities, and people with disabilities.

Program delivery activities: These activities include outreach, training, public notification, program accessibility or any system, practice or procedure or other activity which increases the knowledge of and participation by women, minorities, and people with disabilities.



**WOMEN'S
Equality
Day
August 26**

Friday, August 26th, is Women's Equality Day 2016, "Celebrating Women's Right to Vote – When Women Succeed, America Succeeds." The observance of Women's Equality Day commemorates passage of the 19th Amendment to the U. S. constitution, granting women the right to vote. In addition, observance calls attention to women's continuing efforts toward full equality. Workplaces, libraries, organizations, and public facilities now participate with Women's Equality Day programs, displays, video showings, or other activities. *Source National Women's History Project* (<http://www.nwhp.org/resources/commemorations/womens-equality-day/>)

Check out this activity: [Women's Equality Day Quiz](#) or **access** <http://www.nwhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016copymaster.pdf>

Ideas for Women's Equality Day (<http://www.nwhp.org/resources/commemorations/womens-equality-day/10-ideas-for-womens-equality-day/>)

Resources and Information: [National Women's History Project](#), (707) 636-2888, www.nwhp.org;
<http://www.nwhp.org/resources/commemorations/womens-equality-day/>

Special Emphasis Observances, and resources and information for August through November 2016:



Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15—October 15)

National Theme: "Honoring Our Heritage. Building our Future."

Resources & Information: Smithsonian Latino Center <http://latino.si.edu/>

National Hispanic Heritage Month <http://hispanicheritagemonth.gov/index.html>



Disability Employment Awareness Month (month of October)

National Theme: #InclusionWorks

Resources and Information: USDA Technology and Accessible Resources Gives Employment Today (TARGET) Center - <http://www.targetcenter.dm.usda.gov/>
U. S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/ndeam/index-2014.htm>



American Indian Heritage Month (month of November)

National Theme: "Serving Our Nations"

Resources & Information: The National Congress of American Indians www.ncai.org; Phone: (202) 466-7767
nativeculture.com www.nativeculture.com/learn/



Veterans Day (November 11, 2016)

National Theme: "Honoring the Men and Women Who Served Our Country"

Resources & Information: U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs <http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/> Email: vetsgay@va.gov
Veterans History Project: <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>

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Additional resources for diversity awareness material and ideas for special observances (catalog, pins, videos, etc.) are available from the following resources:

ARS EEO Video Library: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/files/ARS%20Video%20Library%20Catalog1.pdf>

Diversity Store: www.diversitystore.com; Phone: 800-200-5964; Email – hmsdc@aol.com

Smithsonian: <http://www.si.edu/>; Phone: 202-633-1000; Email: info@si.edu

USDA Department-wide Monthly Observances – Links for Websites: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.html>

Observance events/activities should be conducted in a most cost-efficient manner. Contact Debra Owens-Coleman, Acting MWA Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Program Analyst, at debra.owenscoleman@ars.usda.gov or 979-260-9416 for additional information.



You can earn credit for diversity training when you participate in a Special Emphasis Observance event (i.e., Women's Equality Day, Veterans Day, etc.)?

- ◆ How? There are two options, as applicable:
 1. Record your own learning in AgLearn if the learning item allows users to do so upon completion of the learning item. Access AgLearn and go to Record Learning.
 2. Contact your Designated Location AgLearn Administrator or Debra Owens-Coleman, Acting MWA Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity Program, at

We'd love to highlight your Outreach event or share your story.

Contributions can be sent to your location ODEO representative listed on the front page below the vision statement.

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REE Mission Area EEO Counseling: 202-720-3410, 800-340-4289, TDD: 202-720-3303

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/AboutUs/docs.htm?docid=23089>;

Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Cooperative Resolution Program: Jeff Schmitt; 301-504-1352, jeff.schmitt@ars.usda.gov or coopres@ars.usda.gov

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/odeo/coopres>;

Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Reasonable Accommodation Program: Tonya B. Morris, 301-504-4339, tonya.b.morris@ars.usda.gov

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/AboutUs/docs.htm?docid=23085>;

Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Outreach and Recruitment Branch Area Contact: Debra Owens-Coleman, 979-260-9416, debra.owens-coleman@ars.usda.gov.

<https://www.ars.usda.gov/AboutUs/docs.htm?docid=23072>;

Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Home Page:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/ODEO>

Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>